Romani language

Romani (/ˈrɒməni, ˈroʊ-/;[12][13][14][15] also **Romany**; Romani: *rromani ćhib*) is an Indo-Aryan macrolanguage of the Romani communities.[16] According to Ethnologue, seven varieties of Romani are divergent enough to be considered languages of their own. The largest of these are Vlax Romani (about 500,000 speakers),[17] Balkan Romani (600,000),[18] and Sinte Romani (300,000).[19] Some Romani communities speak mixed languages based on the surrounding language with retained Romani-derived vocabulary – these are known by linguists as Para-Romani varieties, rather than dialects of the Romani language itself.[20]

The differences between the various varieties can be as large as, for example, the differences between the Slavic languages.[21]

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Romani	
rromani ćhib	
Native speakers	c. 1.5 million (SIL Ethnologue) (2015)[1]
Language family	Indo-European ▪ Indo-Iranian ▪ Indo-Aryan ▪ Western[2] ▪ **Romani**
Dialects	Balkan Romani Baltic Romani Carpathian Romani Finnish Kalo Persian Romani Sinte Romani Vlax Romani Welsh-Romani
Official status	
Recognised minority language in	Finland[3] Austria[4] Germany[5] Hungary[6] Norway[7] Sweden[8] Netherlands[9] Colombia[10]
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	`rom` (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=374)
ISO 639-3	`rom` – inclusive code Individual codes: `rmn` – Balkan Romani `rml` – Baltic Romani `rmc` – Carpathian Romani `rmf` – Finnish Kalo

Irregular verbs
Class I
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Class III
Borrowed verbs
Morphology
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	`rmo` – Sinte Romani `rmy` – Vlax Romani `rmw` – Welsh-Romani
Glottolog	`roma1329 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/roma1329)`[11]

Countries in Europe where the Romani language is recognized as a minority language.

Name

Speakers of the Romani language usually refer to the language as *rromani ćhib* "the Romani language" or *rromanes* "in a Rom way".[22] This derives from the Romani word *rrom*, meaning either "a member of the (Romani) group" or "husband".[22] This is also where the term "Roma" derives in English, although some Roma groups refer to themselves using other demonyms (e.g. 'Kaale', 'Sinti', etc.).[22]

Before the late nineteenth century, English-language texts usually referred to the language as the "Gypsy language". While some consider it derogatory, in the US, "gypsy" is still the most-understood term, as "Romani" is not in common use there.[22]

Classification

In the 18th century, it was shown by comparative studies that Romani belongs to the Indo-European language family.[23] In 1763 Vályi István, a Calvinist pastor from Satu Mare in Transylvania, was the first to notice the similarity between Romani and Indo-Aryan by comparing the Romani dialect of Győr with the language (perhaps Sinhala) spoken by three Sri Lankan students he met in the Netherlands.[24] This was followed by the linguist Johann Christian Christoph Rüdiger (1751–1822) whose book *Von der Sprache und Herkunft der Zigeuner aus Indien* (1782) posited Romani was descended from Sanskrit. This prompted the philosopher Christian Jakob Kraus to collect linguistic evidence by systematically interviewing the Roma in Königsberg prison. Kraus's findings were never published, but they may have influenced or laid the groundwork for later linguists, especially August Pott and his pioneering *Darstellung die Zigeuner in Europa und Asien* (1844–45). Research into the way the Romani dialects branched out was started in 1872 by the Slavicist Franz Miklosich in a series of essays. However, it was the philologist Ralph Turner's 1927 article “The Position of Romani in Indo-Aryan” that served as the basis for the integrating Romani into the history of Indian languages.

Romani is an Indo-Aryan language that is part of the Balkan sprachbund. It is the only New Indo-Aryan spoken exclusively outside the Indian subcontinent.[25]

Romani is sometimes classified in the Central Zone or Northwestern Zone Indo-Aryan languages, and sometimes treated as a group of its own.

Romani shares a number of features with the Central Zone languages.[26] The most significant isoglosses are the shift of Old Indo-Aryan *r̥* to *u* or *i* (Sanskrit *śr̥ṇ-*, Romani *šun-* 'to hear') and *kṣ-* to *kh* (Sanskrit *akṣi*, Romani *j-akh* 'eye').[26] However, unlike other Central Zone languages, Romani preserves many dental clusters (Romani *trin* 'three', *phral* 'brother', compare Hindi *tīn*, *bhāi*).[26] This implies that Romani split from the Central Zone languages before the Middle Indo-Aryan period.[26] However, Romani shows some features of New Indo-Aryan, such as erosion of the original nominal case system towards a nominative/oblique dichotomy, with new grammaticalized case suffixes added on.[26] This means that the Romani exodus from India could not have happened until late in the first millennium.[26]

Many words are similar to the Marwari and Lambadi languages spoken in large parts of India. However, Romani is nearer to the Marwari spoken in Rajasthan, India. [27] Romani also shows some similarity to the Northwestern Zone languages.[26] In particular, the grammaticalization of enclitic pronouns as person markers on verbs (*kerdo* 'done' + *me* 'me' → *kerdjom* 'I did') is also found in languages such as Kashmiri and Shina.[26] This evidences a northwest migration during the split from the Central Zone languages consistent with a later migration to Europe.[26]

Based on these data, Matras (2006) views Romani as "kind of Indian hybrid: a central Indic dialect that had undergone partial convergence with northern Indic languages."[26]

In terms of its grammatical structures, Romani is conservative in maintaining almost intact the Middle Indo-Aryan present-tense person concord markers, and in maintaining consonantal endings for nominal case – both features that have been eroded in most other modern Indo-Aryan languages.[26]

Romani shows a number of phonetic changes that distinguish it from other Indo-Aryan languages – in particular, the devoicing of voiced aspirates (*bh dh gh* > *ph th kh*), shift of medial *t d* to *l*, of short *a* to *e*, initial *kh* to *x*, rhoticization of retroflex *ḍ, ṭ, ḍḍ, ṭṭ, ḍh* etc. to *r* and *ř*, and shift of inflectional *-a* to *-o*.[26]

After leaving the Indian subcontinent, Romani was heavily affected by contact with European languages.[26] The most significant of these was Medieval Greek, which contributed lexically, phonemically, and grammatically to Early Romani (10th–13th centuries).[26] This includes inflectional affixes for nouns, and verbs that are still productive with borrowed vocabulary, the shift to VO word order, and the adoption of a preposed definite article.[26] Early Romani also borrowed from Armenian and Persian.[26]

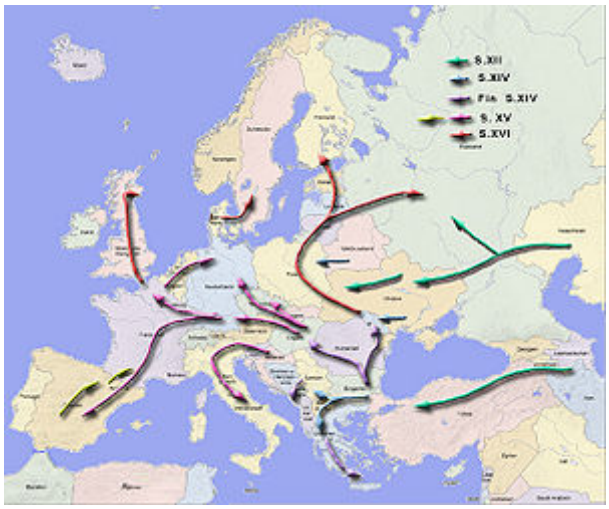
Romani and Domari share some similarities: agglutination of postpositions of the second layer (or case marking clitics) to the nominal stem, concord markers for the past tense, the neutralisation of gender marking in the plural, and the use of the oblique case as an accusative.[28][29] This has prompted much discussion about the relationships between these two languages. Domari was once thought to be the "sister language" of Romani, the two languages having split after the departure from the Indian subcontinent, but more recent research suggests that the differences between them are significant enough to treat them as two separate languages within the Central Zone (Hindustani) group of languages. The Dom and the Rom therefore likely descend from two different migration waves out of India, separated by several centuries.[30][31]

Numerals in the Romani, Domari and Lomavren languages, with Sanskrit, Hindi and Persian forms for comparison.[32] Note that Romani 7–9 are borrowed from Greek.

languages→	Sanskrit	Hindi	Romani	Domari	Lomavren	Persian
↓ numbers						
1	éka	ek	ekh, jekh	yika	yak, yek	yak, yek
2	dvá	do	duj	dī	lui	du, do
3	trí	tīn	trin	tærən	tərin	se
4	catvā́raḥ	cār	štar	štar	išdör	čahār
5	páñca	pā̃c	pandž	pandž	pendž	pandž
6	ṣáṭ	chah	šov	šaš	šeš	šeš
7	saptá	sāt	ifta	xaut	haft	haft
8	aṣṭá	āṭh	oxto	xaišt	hašt	hašt
9	náva	nau	inja	na	nu	noh
10	dáśa	das	deš	des	las	dah
20	viṃśatí	bīs	biš	wīs	vist	bist
100	śatá	sau	šel	saj	saj	sad

History

The first attestation of Romani is from 1542 AD in western Europe.[26] The earlier history of the Romani language is completely undocumented, and is understood primarily through comparative linguistic evidence.[26]



Map showing the migrations of Romani people through Europe and Asia minor

Linguistic evaluation carried out in the nineteenth century by Pott (1845) and Miklosich (1882–1888) showed the Romani language to be a New Indo-Aryan language (NIA), not a Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA), establishing that the ancestors of the Romani could not have left India significantly earlier than AD 1000.

The principal argument favouring a migration during or after the transition period to NIA is the loss of the old system of nominal case, and its reduction to just a two-way case system, nominative vs. oblique. A secondary argument concerns the system of gender differentiation. Romani has only two genders (masculine and feminine). Middle Indo-Aryan languages (named MIA) generally had three genders (masculine, feminine and neuter), and some modern Indo-Aryan languages retain this old system even today.

It is argued that loss of the neuter gender did not occur until the transition to NIA. Most of the neuter nouns became masculine while a few feminine, like the neuter अग्नि (*agni*) in the Prakrit became the feminine आग (*āg*) in Hindi and *jag* in Romani. The parallels in grammatical gender evolution between Romani and other NIA languages have been cited as evidence that the forerunner of Romani remained on the Indian subcontinent until a later period, perhaps even as late as the tenth century.

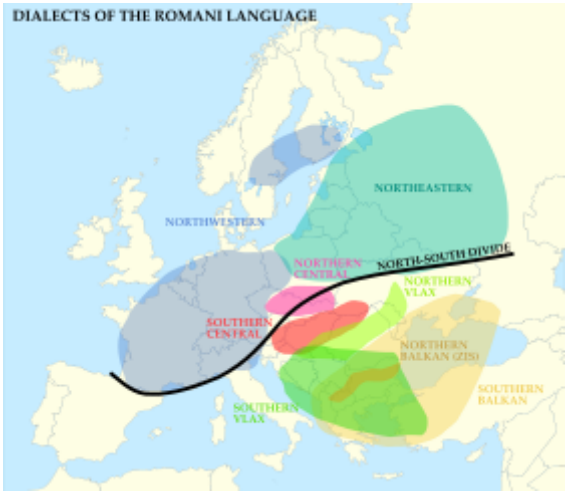
There is no historical proof to clarify who the ancestors of the Romani were or what motivated them to emigrate from the Indian subcontinent, but there are various theories. The influence of Greek, and to a lesser extent of Armenian and the Iranian languages (like Persian and Kurdish) points to a prolonged stay in Anatolia after the departure from South Asia.

The Mongol invasion of Europe beginning in the first half of the thirteenth century triggered another westward migration. The Romani arrived in Europe and afterwards spread to the other continents. The great distances between the scattered Romani groups led to the development of local community distinctions. The differing local influences have greatly affected the modern language, splitting it into a number of different (originally exclusively regional) dialects.

Today, Romani is spoken by small groups in 42 European countries.[33] A project at Manchester University in England is transcribing Romani dialects, many of which are on the brink of extinction, for the first time.[33]

Dialects

Today's dialects of Romani are differentiated by the vocabulary accumulated since their departure from Anatolia, as well as through divergent phonemic evolution and grammatical features. Many Roma no longer speak the language or speak various new contact languages from the local language with the addition of Romani vocabulary.



Dialects of the Romani language

Dialect differentiation began with the dispersal of the Romani from the Balkans around the 14th century and on, and with their settlement in areas across Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.[34] The two most significant areas of divergence are the southeast (with epicenter of the northern Balkans) and west-central Europe (with epicenter Germany).[34] The central dialects replace *s* in grammatical paradigms with *h*.[34] The west-northern dialects append *j-*, simplify *ndř* to *r*, retain *n* in the nominalizer *-ipen* / *-iben*, and lose adjectival past-tense in intransitives (*gelo*, *geli* → *geljas* 'he/she went').[34] Other isoglosses (esp. demonstratives, 2/3pl perfective concord markers, loan verb markers) motivate the division into Balkan, Vlax, Central, Northeast, and Northwest dialects.[34]

Matras (2002, 2005) has argued for a theory of geographical classification of Romani dialects, which is based on the diffusion in space of innovations. According to this theory, Early Romani (as spoken in the Byzantine Empire) was brought to western and other parts of Europe through population migrations of Rom in the 14th–15th centuries.

These groups settled in the various European regions during the 16th and 17th centuries, acquiring fluency in a variety of contact languages. Changes emerged then, which spread in wave-like patterns, creating the dialect differences attested today. According to Matras, there were two major centres of innovations: some changes emerged in western Europe (Germany and vicinity), spreading eastwards; other emerged in the Wallachian area, spreading to the west and south. In addition, many regional and local isoglosses formed, creating a complex wave of language boundaries. Matras points to the prothesis of *j-* in *aro* > *jaro* 'egg' and *ov* > *jov* 'he' as typical examples of west-to-east diffusion, and of addition of prothetic *a-* in *bijav* > *abijav* as a typical east-to-west spread. His conclusion is that dialect differences formed in situ, and not as a result of different waves of migration.[35]

According to this classification, the dialects are split as follows:

- Northern Romani dialects in western and northern Europe, southern Italy and the Iberian peninsula[36]
- Central Romani dialects from southern Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Carpathian Ruthenia and southeastern Austria[36]
- Balkan Romani dialects, including the Black Sea coast dialects[36]
- Vlax Romani dialects, chiefly associated with the historical Wallachian and Transylvanian regions, with outmigrants in various regions throughout Europe and beyond[36]

SIL Ethnologue has the following classification:

- Balkan Romani
  - Arlija
  - Dzambazi
  - Tinners Romani
- Northern Romani
  - Baltic Romani
    - Estonian Romani
    - Latvian Romani (Lettish Romani)
    - North Russian Romani
    - Polish Romani
    - White Russian Romani
  - Carpathian Romani (Central Romani)
    - East Slovak Romani
    - Moravian Romani
    - West Slovak Romani
  - Finnish Kalo Romani
  - Sinte Romani
    - Abbruzzesi
    - Serbian Romani
    - Slovenian-Croatian Romani
  - Welsh Romani
- Vlax Romani
  - Churari (Churarícko, Sievemakers)
  - Eastern Vlax Romani (Bisa)
  - Ghagar
  - Grekurja (Greco)
  - Kalderash (Coppersmith, Kelderashícko)
  - Lovari (Lovarícko)
  - Machvano (Machvanmcko)
  - North Albanian Romani
  - Sedentary Bulgaria Romani
  - Sedentary Romania Romani

- Serbo-Bosnian Romani
- South Albanian Romani
- Ukraine-Moldavia Romani
- Zagundzi

In a series of articles (beginning from 1982), Marcel Courthiade proposed a different kind of classification. He concentrates on the dialectal diversity of Romani in three successive strata of expansion, using the criteria of phonological and grammatical changes. Finding the common linguistic features of the dialects, he presents the historical evolution from the first stratum (the dialects closest to the Anatolian Romani of the 13th century) to the second and third strata. He also names as "pogadialects" (after the *Pogadi* dialect of Great Britain) those with only a Romani vocabulary grafted into a non-Romani language (normally referred to as Para-Romani).

A table of some dialectal differences:

First stratum	Second stratum	Third stratum
phirdom, phirdyom *phirdyum, phirjum*	*phirdem*	*phirdem*
guglipe(n)/guglipa *guglibe(n)/gugliba*	*guglipe(n)/guglipa* *guglibe(n)/gugliba*	*guglimos*
pani *khoni* *kuni*	*pai, payi* *khoi, khoyi* *kui, kuyi*	*pai, payi* *khoi, khoyi* *kui, kuyi*
ćhib	*shib*	*shib*
jeno	*zheno*	*zheno*
po	*po/mai*	*mai*

The first stratum includes the oldest dialects: *Mećkari* (of Tirana), *Kabuʒi* (of Korça), *Xanduri*, *Drindari*, *Erli*, *Arli*, *Bugurji*, *Mahaʒeri* (of Pristina), *Ursari* (*Rićhinari*), *Spoitori* (*Xoraxane*), *Karpatichi*, *Polska Roma*, *Kaale* (from Finland), *Sinto-manush*, and the so-called *Baltic dialects*.

In the second there are *Ćergari* (of Podgorica), *Gurbeti*, *Jambashi*, *Fichiri*, *Filipiʒi* (of Agia Varvara)

The third comprises the rest of the so-called Gypsy dialects, including *Kalderash*, *Lovari*, *Machvano*.

Mixed languages

Some Romanies have developed mixed languages (chiefly by retaining Romani lexical items and adopting second language grammatical structures), including:

- in Northern Europe
  - Angloromani (in England)
  - Scottish Cant (in Lowland Scotland)
  - Scandoromani (in Norway & Sweden)
- on the Iberian Peninsula and France:
  - Erromintxela (in the Basque Country)
  - Caló (in Portugal and Spain).

    - Manouche (a variant of Sinte Romani in France and its Mediterranean borders from Spain to Italy)
- in Southeast Europe
    - Romano-Greek
    - Romano-Serbian
- in the Caucasus (Armenia)
    - Lomavren

Geographic distribution

Romani is the only Indo-Aryan language spoken almost exclusively in Europe (apart from emigrant populations).[37]

The most concentrated areas of Romani speakers are found in Romania. Although there are no reliable figures for the exact number of Romani speakers, it may be the largest minority language of the European Union.[38]

Status

The language is recognized as a minority language in many countries. At present the only places in the world where Romani is employed as an official language are the Republic of Kosovo[a] (only regionally, not nationally)[39] and the Šuto Orizari Municipality within the administrative borders of Skopje, North Macedonia's capital.

The first efforts to publish in Romani were undertaken in the interwar Soviet Union (using the Cyrillic script) and in socialist Yugoslavia.[40]

Some traditional communities have expressed opposition to codifying Romani or having it used in public functions.[37] However, the mainstream trend has been towards standardization.[37]

Different variants of the language are now in the process of being codified in those countries with high Romani populations (for example, Slovakia). There are also some attempts currently aimed at the creation of a unified standard language.

A standardized form of Romani is used in Serbia, and in Serbia's autonomous province of Vojvodina, Romani is one of the officially recognized languages of minorities having its own radio stations and news broadcasts.

In Romania, a country with a sizable Romani minority (3.3% of the total population), there is a unified teaching system of the Romani language for all dialects spoken in the country. This is primarily a result of the work of Gheorghe Sarău, who made Romani textbooks for teaching Romani children in the Romani language. He teaches a purified, mildly prescriptive language, choosing the original Indo-Aryan words and grammatical elements from various dialects. The pronunciation is mostly like that of the dialects from the first stratum. When there are more variants in the dialects, the variant that most closely resembles the oldest forms is chosen, like *byav*, instead of *abyav*, *abyau*, *akana* instead of *akanak*, *shunav* instead of *ashunav* or *ashunau*, etc.

An effort is also made to derive new words from the vocabulary already in use, *i.e.*, *xuryavno* (airplane), *vortorin* (slide rule), *palpaledikhipnasko* (retrospectively), *pashnavni* (adjective). There is an ever-changing set of borrowings from Romanian as well, including such terms as *vremea* (weather, time), *primariya* (town

hall), *frishka* (cream), *sfinto* (saint, holy). Hindi-based neologisms include *bijli* (bulb, electricity), *misal* (example), *chitro* (drawing, design), *lekhipen* (writing), while there are also English-based neologisms, like *printisarel* < "to print".

Romani is now used on the internet, in some local media, and in some countries as a medium of instruction.[37]

Orthography

Historically, Romani was an exclusively unwritten language;[37] for example, Slovakian Romani's orthography was codified only in 1971.[41]

The overwhelming majority of academic and non-academic literature produced currently in Romani is written using a Latin-based orthography.[42]

The proposals to form a unified Romani alphabet and one standard Romani language by either choosing one dialect as a standard, or by merging more dialects together, have not been successful - instead, the trend is towards a model where each dialect has its own writing system.[43] Among native speakers, the most common pattern for individual authors to use an orthography based on the writing system of the dominant contact language: thus Romanian in Romania, Hungarian in Hungary and so on.

To demonstrate the differences, the phrase /romani tʃʰib/, which means "Romani language" in all the dialects, can be written as *román csib*, *román čib*, *romani tschib*, *román tschiwi*, *romani tšiw*, *romeni tšiv*, *romanitschub*, *rromani čhib*, *romani chib*, *rhomani chib*, *romaji šjib*[23] and so on.

A currently observable trend, however, appears to be the adoption of a loosely English and Czech-oriented orthography, developed spontaneously by native speakers for use online and through email.[42]

Phonology

The Romani sound system is not highly unusual among European languages. Its most marked features are a three-way contrast between unvoiced, voiced, and aspirated stops: *p t k č*, *b d g dž*, and *ph th kh čh*,[44] and the presence in some dialects of a second rhotic *ř*, realized as uvular [ʀ], a long trill [r:], or retroflex [ɽ] or [ɻ].[44]

The following is the core sound inventory of Romani. Phonemes in parentheses are only found in some dialects:

Romani consonants[44]

	Labial	Alveolar	Post-al. /Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Nasal	m	n			
Stop	p b pʰ	t d tʰ		k g kʰ	
Affricate		ts	tʃ dʒ tʃʰ		
Fricative	f v	s z	ʃ (ʒ)	x	h
Approximant		l	j		

The vowels of Romani[44]

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e		o
Open		a	

Rhotic		r (ř)			

Eastern and Southeastern European Romani dialects commonly have palatalized consonants, either distinctive or allophonic.[44] Some dialects add the central vowel ə or ɨ.[44] Vowel length is often distinctive in Western European Romani dialects.[44] Loans from contact languages often allow other non-native phonemes.[44]

Conservative dialects of Romani have final stress, with the exception of some unstressed affixes (e.g. the vocative ending, the case endings added on to the accusative noun, and the remoteness tense marker).[44] Central and Western European dialects often have shifted stress earlier in the word.[44]

At the end of a word, voiced consonants become voiceless and aspirated ones lose aspiration. [23] Some examples:

written form	pronunciation	meaning
gad	[gat]	shirt
gada	[gada]	shirts
ačh!	[at͡ʃ]	stop!
ačhel	[at͡ʃʰel]	(he, she) stops

Lexicon

Romani word	English translation	Etymology
pani	water	Sanskrit *pānīya* (पानीय), compare Hindi *pānī* (पानी)
maro	bread	Sanskrit *maṇḍaka* (मण्डक) « kind of bread », compare Sindhi *mānī* (مَانِي) « bread »
tato	warm	Sanskrit *tapta* (तप्त), compare Rajasthani *tātō* (तातो), Nepali (तातो),Bhojpuri *tātal* (तातल)
laʒ	shame	Sanskrit *lajjā* (लज्जा), compare Marathi *lāz* (लाज)
jakh	eye	Sanskrit *akṣi* (अक्षि), compare Gujarati *āṅkh* (આંખ), Nepali *āṅkhā* (आँखा)
ćhuri	knife	Sanskrit *kṣurī* (क्षुरी), compare Urdu *churī* (چھری)
thud	milk	Sanskrit *dugdha* (दुग्ध), compare Bundeli *dūdh* (दूध)
kham	sun	Sanskrit *gharma* (घर्म) « heat », compare Bhojpuri, Haryanvi *ghām* (घाम)
phuv	earth	Sanskrit *bhūmi* (भूमि), compare Hindi *bhū* (भू)
puć/el	to ask	Sanskrit *pr̥cchati* (पृच्छति), compare Urdu *puch* (پوچھ), cf. Bengali. puchā (পুছা)
avgin	honey	Persian *angabīn* (انگبین)
mol	wine	Persian *may* (می), compare Urdu *mul* (مے)
ambrol	pear	Persian *amrūd* (امرود)
ćerxai	star	Persian *čarx* (چرخ) « sky »
zumav/el	to try, to taste	Persian *āzmūdan* (آزمودن)
rez	vine	Kurdish *rez* (ڕز)
vordon / *verdo*	cart	Ossetian *wærdon* (уæрдон)
grast / *graj* (north)	horse	Armenian *grast* (գրաստ) « sumpter, sorry horse »
xumer	dough	Armenian *xmor* (խմոր)
morthĭ	skin	Armenian *mort ʰi* (մորթի)
ćekat / *ćikat*	forehead	Armenian *čakat* (ճակատ)
patĭv	honor	Armenian *pativ* (պատիվ)
khilăv	plum	Georgian *k ʰliavi* (ქლიავი)
càmla	chestnut	Georgian *tsabli* (წაბლი)
grubo	fat	Slavic, for example Polish *gruby*
camcàli	eyelash	Georgian *tsamtsami* (წამწამი)

drom	road	Greek *drómos* (δρόμος)
stadǐ	hat	Greek *skiádi* (σκιάδι)
xoli / *xolǐn*	gall, anger	Greek *kholí* (χολή)
zervo	left	Greek *zervós* (ζερβός)
xin/el	to defecate	Greek *khýnō* (χύνω) « to empty »
pùśka	gun	Slavic *puška* (пушка)
pràxo	dust, ash	Slavic *prach* / *prah* (прах)
vùlica	street	Slavic *ulica* (улица)
kòśnica	basket	Bulgarian *košnica* (кошница)
gurùśa (north)	penny	Polish *grosz*
kaxni / *khanǐ*	hen	Czech *kachna* « duck »
ràca	duck	Romanian *rață*, compare Slovene *ráca*
màćka	cat	Slavic *mačka*
mangin / *mandǐn*	treasure	Turkish *mangır* « penny », through a Tatar dialect.
bèrga (north)	mountain	German *Berg*
niglo (sinto)	hedgehog	German *Igel*
gàjza (sinto)	goat	Alemannic *geiss*

Morphology

Nominals

Nominals in Romani are nouns, adjectives, pronouns and numerals.[23] Some sources describe articles as nominals.

The indefinite article is often borrowed from the local contact language.[45]

Types

General Romani is an unusual language, in having two classes of nominals, based on the historic origin of the word, that have a completely different morphology. The two classes can be called *inherited* and *borrowed*,[23] but this article uses names from Matras (2006),[46] *ikeoclitic* and *xenoclitic*. The class to which a word belongs is obvious from its ending.

Ikeoclitic

The first class is the old, Indian vocabulary (and to some extent Persian, Armenian and Greek loanwords).[23] The ikeoclitic class can also be divided into two sub-classes, based on the ending.[46]

Nominals ending in o/i

The ending of words in this sub-class is -o with masculines, -i with feminines, with the latter ending triggering palatalisation of preceding *d, t, n, l* to *ď, ť, ň, ľ*.[23]

Examples:[23]

- masculine
  - ***o čhavo*** - the son
  - ***o cikno*** - the little
  - ***o amaro*** - our (m.)
- feminine
  - ***e rakľi*** - non-romani girl
  - ***e cikňi*** - small (note the change n > ň)
  - ***e amari*** - ours (f.)

Nominals without ending

All words in this sub-class have no endings, regardless of gender.

Examples:[47]

- masculine
  - ***o phral/špal*** - the brother
  - ***o šukar*** - the nice (m.)
  - ***o dat*** - the father
- feminine
  - ***e phen*** - the sister
  - ***e šukar*** - the nice (f.) - same as m.
  - ***e daj*** - the mother

Xenoclitic

The second class is loanwords from European languages.[23][47][48] (Matras adds that the morphology of the new loanwords might be borrowed from Greek.)

The ending of borrowed masculine is -os, -is, -as, -us, and the borrowed feminine ends in -a.

Examples from Slovakian Romani:[23][47]

- masculine
  - ***o šustros*** - shoemaker
  - ***o autobusis*** - bus
  - ***o učiteľis*** - teacher (m.)
- feminine
  - ***e rokľa/maijka*** - skirt
  - ***e oblaka/vokna*** - window

- ***e učiteľka*** - teacher (f.) (from *učiteľka* in Slovak)

Basics of morphology

Romani has two grammatical genders (masculine / feminine) and two numbers (singular / plural).[45]

All nominals can be singular or plural.[49]

Cases

Nouns are marked for case, the most important being the nominative and the accusative case.

The vocative, nominative and indirect case are a bit "outside" of the case system[50] as they are produced only by adding a suffix to the root.

Example: the suffix for singular masculine vocative of ikeoclitic types is -***eja***.[51][52]

- ***čhaveja!*** - you, boy (or son)!
- ***cikneja!*** - you, little one!
- ***phrala!*** - brother!

The other five cases are a little different. They are all derived from an "indirect root", that is made a little differently for each type;[23] the indirect root is the same as the accusative case. To this root, every case adds its own suffix, with disregard to gender or type: -*te* / -*de* (locative and prepositional), -*ke* / -*ge* (dative), -*tar*/-*dar* (ablative), -*sa(r)* (instrumental and comitative), and -*ker*- / -*ger*- (genitive).[45]

Example: The endings for o/i ending nominals are as follows:

	sg. nom.	**sg. acc.**	**pl. nom.**	**pl. acc.**
'boy' (masculine)	*čhav-o*	*čhav-es*	*čhav-e*	*čhav-en*
'woman' (feminine)	*řomn-i*	*řomn-ja*	*řomn-ja*	*řomn-jen*

Example: the suffix for indirect root for masculine plural for all inherited words is -*en*,[50][53] the dative suffix is -*ke*.[54][55]

- ***o kozaro*** - mushroom
- ***kozaren*** - the indirect root (also used as accusative)
- ***Ňila phiras kozarenge.*** – In the summer we go on mushrooms (meaning picking mushrooms)

There are many declension classes of nouns that decline differently, and show dialectal variation.[45]

Slovakian Romani also uses these nine cases:[56]

- nominative
- vocative
- accusative
- dative
- locative

- ablative
- instrumental
- genitive
- indirect case

The indirect case is used when a word functions as an attribute before a word,[57] and is not considered a case in some literature.

Agreement

Romani shows the typically Indo-Aryan pattern of the genitive agreeing with its head noun.

Example:

- *čhav-es-ker-o phral* - 'the boy's brother'
- *čhav-es-ker-i phen* - 'the boy's sister'.[45]

Adjectives and the definite article show agreement with the noun they modify.

Example:

- *mir-o dad* - 'my father'
- *mir-i daj* - 'my mother'.[45][58]

Verbs

Romani derivations are highly synthetic and partly agglutinative. However, they are also sensitive to recent development - for example, in general, Romani in Slavic countries show an adoption of productive aktionsart morphology.[59]

The core of the verb is the lexical root, verb morphology is suffixed.[59]

The verb stem (including derivation markers) by itself has non-perfective aspect and is present or subjunctive.[45]

Types

Similarly to nominals, verbs in Romani belong to several classes, but unlike nominals, these are not based on historical origin. However, the loaned verbs can be recognized, again, by specific endings, which some[59] argue are Greek in origin.

Irregular verbs

Some words are irregular, like *te jel* - to be.

Class I

The next three classes are recognizable by suffix in 3rd person singular.

The first class, called I.,[23][60] has a suffix *-el* in 3rd person singular.

Examples, in 3 ps. sg:[60]

- *te kerel* -to do
- *te šunel* - to hear
- *te dikhel* - to see

Class II

Words in the second category, called II.,[23][60] have a suffix *-l* in 3rd person singular.

Examples, in 3 ps. sg:[60]

- *te džal* - to go
- *te ladžal* - to be ashamed, shy away.
- *te asal* - to laugh
- *te paťal* - to believe
- *te hal* - to eat

Class III

All the words in the third class are semantically causative passive.[61]

Examples:[62]

- *te sikhľol* - to learn
- *te labol* - to burn
- *to marďol* - to be beaten
- *te pašľol* - to lie

Borrowed verbs

Borrowed verbs from other languages are marked with affixes taken from Greek tense/aspect suffixes, including *-iz-*, *-in-*, and *-is-*.[45]

Morphology

The Romani verb has three persons and two numbers, singular and plural. There is no verbal distinction between masculine and feminine.

Romani tenses are, not exclusively, present tense, future tense, two past tenses (perfect and imperfect), present or past conditional and present imperative.

Depending on the dialect, the suffix *-a* marks the present, future, or conditional.[45] There are many perfective suffixes, which are determined by root phonology, valency, and semantics: e.g. *ker-d-* 'did'.[45]

There are two sets of personal conjugation suffixes, one for non-perfective verbs, and another for perfective verbs.[45] The non-perfective personal suffixes, continued from Middle Indo-Aryan, are as follows:[45]

Non-perfective personal suffixes

	1	2	3
sg.	*-av*	*-es*	*-el*
pl.	*-as*	*-en*	

These are slightly different for consonant- and vowel-final roots (e.g. *xa-s* 'you eat', *kam-es* 'you want').[45]

The perfective suffixes, deriving from late Middle Indo-Aryan enclitic pronouns, are as follows:

Perfective personal suffixes

	1	2	3
sg.	*-om*	*-al* / *-an*	*-as*
pl.	*-am*	*-an* / *-en*	*-e*

Verbs may also take a further remoteness suffix *-as* / *-ahi* / *-ys* / *-s*.[45] With non-perfective verbs this marks the imperfect, habitual, or conditional.[45] With the perfective, this marks the pluperfect or counterfactual.[45]

Class I

All the persons and numbers of present tense of the word *te kerel*[63]

	sg	pl
1.ps	*me kerav*	*amen keras*
2.ps	*tu keres*	*tumen keren*
3.ps	*jov kerel*	*jon keren*

Various tenses of the same word, all in 2nd person singular.[23]

- present - *tu keres*
- future - *tu ka keres*
- past imperfect = present conditional - *tu kerehas*
- past perfect - *tu kerďal* (*ker* + *d* + *'al*)
- past conditional - *tu kerďalas* (*ker* + *d* + *'al* + *as*)
- present imperative - *ker!*

Class II

All the persons and numbers of present tense of the word *te paťal*[63]

	sg	pl
1.ps	*me paťav*	*amen paťas*
2.ps	*tu paťas*	*tumen paťan*
3.ps	*jov paťal*	*jon paťan*

Various tenses of the word *te chal*, all in 2nd person singular.[23]

- present - *tu dzas*
- future - *tu dzaha*
- past imperfect = present conditional - *tu dzahas*
- past perfect - *tu dzaľom* (irregular - regular form of *tu paťas* is *tu paťaňom*)
- past conditional - *tu dzaľahas*
- present imperative - *dzaľa!*

Class III

All the persons and numbers of present tense of the word *te pašľol*.[23] Note the added *-uv-*, which is typical for this group.

	sg	pl
1.ps	*me pašľuvav*	*amen pašľuvas*
2.ps	*tu pašľos*	*tumen pašľon*
3.ps	*jov pašľol*	*jon pašľon*

Various tenses of the same word, all in 2nd person singular again.[23]

- present - *tu pašľos*
- future - *tu pašľa*
- past imperfect = present conditional - *tu pašľas*
- past perfect - *tu pašľiľal* (*pašľ* + *il* + *'al*)
- past conditional - *tu pašľiľalas* (*pašľ* + *il* + *'al* + *as*)
- present imperative - *pašľuv!*[64]

Valency

Valency markers are affixed to the verb root either to increase or decrease valency.[45] There is dialectal variation as to which markers are most used; common valency-increasing markers are *-av-*, *-ar-*, and *-ker*, and common valency-decreasing markers are *-jov-* and *-áv-*.[45] These may also be used to derive verbs from nouns and adjectives.[45]

Syntax

Romani syntax is quite different from most Indo-Aryan languages, and shows more similarity to the Balkan languages.[58]

Šebková and Žlnayová, while describing Slovakian Romani, argues that Romani is a free word order language[23] and that it allows for theme-rheme structure, similarly to Czech, and that in some Romani dialects in East Slovakia, there is a tendency to put a verb at the end of a sentence.

However, Matras describes it further.[65] According to Matras, in most dialects of Romani, Romani is a VO language, with SVO order in contrastive sentences and VSO order in thetic sentences.[58] The tendency to put verb on the end in some dialects is the Slavic influence.

Examples, from Slovakian Romani:[66]

- *Odi kuči šilaľi.* - This cup is cold.
- *Oda šilaľi kuči.* - This is a cold cup.

Clauses are usually finite.[58] Relative clauses, introduced by the relativizer *kaj*, are postponed.[58] Factual and non-factual complex clauses are distinguished.[58]

Romani in modern times

Romani has lent several words to English such as *pal* (ultimately from Sanskrit *bhrātar* "brother"[67]) and *nark* "informant" (from Romani *nāk* "nose"[67]). Other Romani words in general slang are *gadgie* (originally meaning "person who's not Roma", currently used as a gender-neutral term for boyfriend/girlfriend in Bulgaria), *shiv* or *chiv* (knife). Urban British slang shows an increasing level of Romani influence,[68] with some words becoming accepted into the lexicon of standard English (for example, *chav* from an assumed Anglo-Romani word, meaning "small boy", in the majority of dialects). There are efforts to teach and familiarise Vlax-Romani to new generation of Romani so that Romani spoken in different parts of the world are connected through a single dialect of Romani. Indian Institute of Romani Studies, Chandigarh published several Romani language lessons through its journal *Roma* during the 1970s.[69] Occasionally loanwords from other Indo-Iranian languages such as Hindi are mistakenly labelled as Romani due to surface similarities (due to a shared root), such as *cushy*, which is from Hindi (itself a loan from Persian *khuš*) meaning "excellent, healthy, happy".[67]

See also

- Balkan Romani
- Bohemian Romani
- Carpathian Romani
- Finnish Kalo language
- Laiuse Romani language
- Lotegorisch
- Romani alphabets
- Zargari Romani
- Peaky Blinders (TV series)

Notes

a. Kosovo is the subject of a territorial dispute between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of Serbia. The Republic of Kosovo unilaterally declared independence on 17 February 2008, but Serbia continues to claim it as part of its own sovereign territory. The two governments began to normalise relations in 2013, as part of the 2013 Brussels Agreement. Kosovo is currently recognized as an independent state by 97 out of the 193 United Nations member states. In total, 112 UN member states recognized Kosovo at some point, of which 15 later withdrew their recognition.

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Further reading

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- Albert Thomas Sinclair (1915). George Fraser Black (ed.). *An American-Romani Vocabulary* (https://archive.org/details/anamericanroman01librgoog) (reprint ed.). New York Public Library, 1915. Retrieved 24 April 2014. "New York Public Library."
- Francis Hindes Groome, 'Gipsies'. *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 7th ed. 1879. Volume X, pages 611–618. This article contains texts written by the Welsh harper John Roberts, a native speaker of Romani. [3] (https://archive.org/stream/encyclopediabrit10newyrich#page/610/mode/2up)
- Charles Leland. *The English Gipsies and their language.* 4th ed. London: Kegan Paul Trench, Trübner, 1893. [4] (https://archive.org/stream/encyclopediabrit10newyrich#page/610/mode/2up)
- Walter Simson. *A History of the Gipsies: with specimens of the Gipsy language. Edited, with preface, introduction, and notes, and a disquisition on the past, present and future of Gipsydom*, by James Simson. London: Sampson Low & Marston, 1865. A History of the Gipsies with Specimens of the Gipsy Language by Walter Simson (https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_nHOjolXmEygC)
- Peter Bakker, Milena Hübschmannová. *What Is the Romani Language?*. Hatfield: University Of Hertfordshire Press, 2000.
- The Zincali : or, An account of the Gypsies of Spain ; with an original collection of their songs and poetry, by (https://archive.org/details/zincalioraccount00borr)George Borrow (1842)
- The Zincali, an account of the Gypsies of Spain (1907) (https://archive.org/details/zincaliaccountof00borruoft)
- El gitanismo : historia, costumbres, y dialecto de los gitanos (https://archive.org/details/elgitanismohist00quingoog)
- Embéo e Majaró Lucas (https://archive.org/details/emboemajarlucas29470gut)
- John Sampson. *The dialect of the gypsies of Wales : being the older form of British Romani preserved in the speech of the clan of Abram Wood.* Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1926. xxiii, 230 p. [5] (https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=y7FBAAAAYAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=John+Sampson+gypsies+Wales&ots=8RVWPNi40q&sig=1FjSzulxdLa-F741uGBw-0lXzEU#v=onepage&q=John%20Sampson%20gypsies%20Wales&f=false)

External links

- Romani project at Manchester University (https://web.archive.org/web/20130113082255/http://romani.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/), with a collection of downloadable papers about the

Romani language and a collection of links to Romani media

- Outline of Romani Grammar (http://www.seelrc.org:8080/grammar/pdf/romani_bookmarked.pdf)—Victor A. Friedman
- Partial Romani/English Dictionary (https://www.webcitation.org/query?url=http://www.geocities.com/SoHo/3698/rom.htm&date=2009-10-25+09:55:49)—Compiled by Angela Ba'Tal Libal and Will Strain
- ROMLEX Lexical Database (http://romani.uni-graz.at/romlex/lex.xml) of different dialects of Romani
- Romani Swadesh list of basic vocabulary words (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Romani_Swadesh_list)—from Wiktionary's Swadesh list appendix (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists)
- "Romani language in Macedonia in the Third Millennium: Progress and Problems" (http://mahi.uchicago.edu/media/faculty/vfriedm/188Friedman05.pdf), Victor Friedman.
- "The Romani Language in the Republic of Macedonia: Status, Usage and Sociolinguistic Perspectives (https://web.archive.org/web/20141020072019/http://www.balkanethnology.org/files/library/Viktor/Friedman_4.pdf), Victor Friedman.
- Romani Wikipedia (head page)

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